

Observing Behavior: Theory and Application in Mental Retardation. Volume 1. G. P. Sackett (Ed.). Baltimore, Md. University Park Press. 1978. \$31.90.

This book is a collection of conference papers on the use of systematic observation procedures in studying mental retardation. As a reference text the volume makes a useful contribution to researchers interested in the use of observational methodologies. The book is organized into three main sections. The first introduces the reader to issues derived from ethological and ecological theories of human behaviour and includes two overview chapters which introduce readers to Barker and Wright's naturalistic observation methods (viz. the Specimen Record, and the Behaviour Setting Survey method).

The second section presents several interesting data-based papers which have employed a variety of recording procedures such as time-sampling. Several of these papers illustrate the use of direct observations measures in studying developmental issues relevant to the mentally retarded. Topics covered include parent-infant interaction studies, cognitive development, language, group processes and the behaviour of the retarded in community settings. This section is essentially a series of examples of how observation measures can be applied to test a variety of experimental hypotheses. Unfortunately the papers are of uneven quality.

The final section raises a number of implications of observational approaches for future research and policy in the mental retardation field.

The editor has made an attempt to highlight key issues and to integrate the various sections of the book. This task unfortunately has not been very successful due to the variety of issues addressed by individual paper contributors.

In summary, this book should be of value to psychologists and educators interested in the use of observational methodologies, and would make a useful addition to one's library.

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